

Message Text

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ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CU-04 MMO-04 USIA-15 PA-02 /039 W

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P 261015Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4872

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 1758

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, NP

SUBJECT: BICENTENNIAL EVEREST EXPEDITION

REF: STATE 099092

1. RADIO SITUATION FROM BASE CAMP IS AS FOLLOWS. THERE IS A POLICE RADIO LINK AT NAMCHE TO CENTRAL POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS IN KATHMANDU. IT IS, HOWEVER, UNRELIABLE AND WAS OUT OF ORDER DURING LATEST BONNINGTON EXPEDITION. IN ADDITION, THERE IS A RADIO AT JAPANESE HOTEL AT SYANGBOCHE UNDER CONTROL OF METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT. NEITHER RADIO, HOWEVER, IS AVAILABLE TO EXPEDITIONS EXCEPT FOR EMERGENCIES.

2. WHILE SOME EXPEDITIONS IN PAST HAVE BEEN GRANTED RIGHT TO DIRECT BASE CAMP-KATHMANDU LINK, MFA IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE EXPEDITIONS CAPABILITY TO TALK TO OUTSIDE WORLD DIRECTLY. WE SUGGEST THAT EXPEDITION REQUEST FOLLOWING (THROUGH EMBASSY AS WELL AS THROUGH NEPALESE EMBASSY WASHINGTON.) THEY COULD HAVE RADIO IN NAMCHE OPERATING FROM POLICE HEADQUARTERS TO POLICE IN KATHMANDU. NORMALLY OPERATOR WOULD USE POLICE RADIO BUT WOULD HAVE EXPEDITION SUPPLIED BACKUP SET. THIS WOULD INVOLVE HIRING TWO EX-GURKHA SIGNALS OFFICERS (ONE IN NAMCHE, ONE IN KATHMANDU) TO SERVE EXPEDITION. SUCH SYSTEM WOULD ALLOW POLICE TO MONITOR BROADCASTS AND WOULD PROVIDE HMG ASSURANCES YOU WOULD NOT BE BROADCASTING TO FOREIGN OPERATORS. WE ESTIMATE CHANCES OF RECEIVING SUCH PERMISSION AT SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN 50/50. WE WOULD UNCLASSIFIED

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ARGUE THAT IN ADDITION TO WIDE INTEREST IN EXPEDITION TO BE

SERVED BY UP-TO-DATE NEWS REPORTS, RADIO WOULD GIVE EXPEDITION IMPORTANT SAFETY FACTOR IN EVENT THAT HELICOPTER EVACUATION REQUIRED AND NAMCHE POLICE RADIO BROKEN. RUNNER COULD REACH NAMCHE FROM BASE CAMP IN TEN TO TWELVE HOURS PROVIDING DAILY REPORTS AS REQUIRED.

3. WHILE RUNNER COULD BE AVOIDED BY RADIO FROM BASE TO NAMCHE PREVIOUS EXPEDITIONS HAVE HAD DIFFICULTY IN SETTING UP RADIO TO NAMCHE FOR TECHNICAL REASONS. WE SUGGEST RUNNER AS BEST SYSTEM.

4. EXPEDITION CANNOT COUNT ON AIR SERVICE TO LUKLA MUCH BEFORE FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER. MONSOON NORMALLY ENDS BY OCTOBER 1 BUT AIR SERVICE REMAINS QUESTIONABLE UP TO OCTOBER 15. ALTHOUGH PAPHLU IS LOWER, WEATHER IS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER TO ASSURE COMMUNICATION. CURRENT COST OF AIR CHARTER FOR KATHMANDU-LUKLA CHARTER IS \$350 FOR PILATUS AND \$750 FOR HELICOPTER (BOTH ROUNDTRIP.) THERE ARE NO TELEX FACILITIES OUTSIDE OF KATHMANDU, AND IN OUR VIEW EXPEDITION IS LIMITED TO RADIO OR RUNNER. ONE TO TWELVE DAYS REQUIRED FOR RUNNER DEPENDS ON DISTANCE TO BE COVERED, BUT RUNNER CAN NORMALLY MAKE KATHMANDU FROM BASE CAMP IN TEN TO TWELVE DAYS. RUNNERS ARE NEARLY 100 PERCENT RELIABLE.

5. IF EXPEDITION DECIDES TO APPLY FOR DIRECT RADIO LINK, WE NEED TECHNICAL DETAILS, INCLUDING TYPE OF RADIO, ESTIMATED POWER OUTPUT AND RANGE, AS WELL AS PROPOSED FREQUENCIES IF POSSIBLE. TIME REQUIRED FOR HMG DECISION COULD TAKE AS LONG AS FOUR TO SIX WEEKS. WE WOULD HOPE FOR FASTER SERVICE IN THIS CASE GIVEN APPROACHING DATE OF EXPEDITION'S ARRIVAL, BUT EMBASSY CANNOT MAKE ANY PROMISES. EMBOFF WILL DISCUSS THIS QUESTION WITH MFA IN NEXT DAYS AND WILL REPORT ATTITUDE.

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